STAFF REPORT

TO:  HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM:  GREGORY A. RAY, P.E. PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER

SUBJECT:  RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CITY HALL PUBLIC SERVICES FRONT COUNTER CONSOLIDATION /REORGANIZATION

BACKGROUND

Staff is seeking approval to proceed with construction of a new public services counter and to consolidate all counter services into a single counter location. The City currently has four public service counters. Each counter is staffed by a City department or combination of departments as follows: Community Development/Public Works, Administrative Services/Utility Billing, Parks and Recreation, and City Management. There appears to be some overlap in duties currently performed at each counter and some inefficiency in the use of limited City Hall space. Consolidating all public counter services into a single location could result in better service to the public, less duplication of duties and more efficient use of space in City Hall. In addition, counter consolidation could provide an opportunity for staff reductions, if needed, to reduce City operating costs in response to current budget projections.

DISCUSSION

The concept of developing a single public services counter to improve service and provide more efficiency began with a budget reduction strategy meeting in mid-2011. Staff met numerous times since then to further refine the idea. Staff has considered the physical changes that are needed to facilitate a single counter and the logistics of moving employees and equipment. Staff developed a preliminary construction plan showing the proposed counter configuration and other changes to the interior of City Hall.

Location

The current Community Development/Public Works counter is the only suitable location for a consolidated counter due to the large lobby space and entry area. The proposed counter would incorporate two work areas and, if needed, would allow for two employees to handle utility payments. Public access to the existing hallway would be limited to restroom access. Upon completion the east entrance to City Hall would be closed and used for employees only.

APPROVED FOR FORWARDING

ROBERT PERRAULT
CITY MANAGER

Meeting Date: March 19, 2012

Please Review for the Possibility of a Potential Conflict of Interest:

☒ None identified by Staff  ☐ Bright
☒ Shoals  ☐ Peterson
☒ Nicolls  ☐ Molnar

Agenda Item No.
Proposed Project

Staff's recommended project would be confined to the area currently being used by the Community Development and Public Works Departments and would consist of a new counter, minor wall relocations and minor office space changes. Refer to Attachment 1 for the recommended project and optional work being considered but not recommended at this time. Based on an estimate from a local contractor staff has estimated that this work will take three to five weeks to complete and will cost approximately $15,000. Because the counter will primarily be used for utility billing and development related services, in addition to the General Fund, the cost can be allocated to the other funds whose departments are served by the counter including the Sewer Fund, Water Fund, Storm Water Fund and Water Conservation Fund. As a result, the actual cost to the General Fund will be considerably less. In the future, other interior changes may be necessary to better accommodate relocation of employees.

As part of the proposed counter consolidation, staff is proposing to use CDBG funds for upgrading the existing entry doors for accessibility and minor accessibility upgrades to the existing bathrooms. These ADA upgrades are estimated to cost approximately $10,000. In addition, it may be possible to combine this project with construction of a new media room that would allow the existing media equipment and personnel to be moved to a single climate-controlled location. This project has separate funding from PEG Access funds.

Staffing

Staff has determined that front counter consolidation would be most effective if several departments were relocated within City Hall. Staff is recommending that the Administrative Services department offices be located nearest the proposed counter to facilitate utility billing and payments (this department receives the most daily walk-in traffic). Based on estimates of current public service demands for each department, staff has determined that the counter could be staffed by one full-time employee from Administrative Services and a second employee located in a nearby workspace to handle periods of greater demand. This would require two counter stations, each with a cashier drawer to provide better service during periods of high demand, such as near the deadline for receipt of water payments. Counter employees could be cross-trained to provide basic services for Parks and Recreation, Community Development, and Public Works. More complex public service requests could be handled by staff from each department at the part-time counter station or elsewhere within City Hall.

ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives are presented to the City Council for consideration:

1. Authorize staff to proceed with construction of the counter consolidation project.
2. Do not authorize staff to proceed with construction of the counter consolidation project.
3. Provide additional direction to staff.
RECOMMENDATION

Authorize staff to proceed with construction of the counter consolidation project.

FISCAL IMPACT

If Council authorized staff to proceed with a final front counter consolidation plan, staff would work with a licensed architect to develop a final counter and office layout and a final cost estimate and then bid out the project. Staff’s preliminary estimate is that the initial counter project will cost approximately $15,000 with another $10,000 in ADA upgrades. There is currently $25,000 in General Funds budgeted for the City Hall Upgrade project, which includes landscaping and sidewalk repairs around City Hall. In addition, the City has CDBG funds sufficient to cover the ADA aspects of the project. PEG funds are available for construction of a new media room. Once final costs are known, staff will return to Council with a request to transfer funds from the several enterprise and development impact funds to reduce the impact on the General Fund.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The agenda was posted in accordance with the Brown Act.

ATTACHMENT

1. City Hall Public Counter – Preliminary Site Plan
PROPOSED MAIN ENTRANCE

- HALF SWINGING DOOR
- NEW FRONT COUNTER
- BREAK ROOM

CLOSE THIS ENTRANCE TO PUBLIC

NEW FRONT COUNTER

PROPOSED MAIN ENTRANCE

ATTACHMENT 1: PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

OPTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS:
1. CLOSE OFF SLIDER AND CONSTRUCT MEDIA ROOM WITH EXTERIOR ENTRANCE
2. RELOCATE EXISTING CUSTODIAL CLOSET TO ENLARGE OFFICE SPACE
3. CONSTRUCT PUBLIC SERVICE KIOSK
4. DIVIDE EXISTING CITY MANAGEMENT STORAGE TO CREATE STORAGE FOR FUTURE PARKS/RECREATION
5. REMOVE WALL TO CREATE ADDITIONAL OFFICE SPACE
6. CONVERT BATHROOM TO CUSTODIAL CLOSET
7. RELOCATE ENTRANCE TO STORAGE TO PROVIDE CITY MANAGEMENT STORAGE
8. REMOVE PAVEMENT, CONSTRUCT DOORWAY FOR EMPLOYEE ACCESS